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ABSTRACT

Although direct supervision of teachers is rare and most teachers are relatively free to exercise considerable control over their own work, schools generally manage to function without organizational or curricular chaos. The unseen force maintaining control appears to reside in the organization and culture of the school, and may affect teacher behavior more than the efforts of principals, supervisors, and educational reformers. The school's compartmentalized organization helps preserve the teacher's freedom from supervision but also places limits on the teacher's activities. The curriculum and the teaching materials provide guidance that in another organization might be provided directly by supervisors. Organizations socialize their members, and schools call on teachers to adapt to accepted behaviors and to espouse accepted beliefs. Since an organization's culture is developed over time through the sharing of experience, the culture of the educational profession is strong even when the culture of individual schools is not. Supervision can do little to change a school's culture, but trying to change culture may prove more effective than working with individual teachers. Leadership to alter culture can be exerted when new teachers are socialized, when outside visitors present challenging new ideas, and when school staffs are reorganized or reassigned. Twenty-seven references are provided. (PGD)

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THE UNSEEN SUPERVISOR: ORGANIZATION AND CULTURE AS
DETERMINANTS OF TEACHER BEHAVIOR

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THE UNSEEN SUPERVISOR: ORGANIZATION AND CULTURE AS DETERMINANTS
OF TEACHER BEHAVIOR

One of the remarkable characteristics of schools and teachers is their ability to resist change. Despite periodic efforts at bringing about major reforms and the infusion, as in the 1960's, of substantial amounts of funding to support change efforts, schools proceed to do pretty much what they have always done and in the same way. Of course, one can find occasional innovative school systems and isolated instances in which research or the influence of a reform minded administrator has affected practice, but in the main teachers continue to teach as they were taught. A good many heralded innovations lasted only as long as an assertive superintendent was in office or until federal funding ran out. When such special incentives for change ended, the waters closed over and the prevailing culture of the American school once again took hold.

The enduring culture of the American school has frustrated generations of reformers. Cuban (1982) commented on what he calls the "imperviousness" of the American secondary school; marveling at its ability to withstand change efforts and noting that it has changed very little from its prototype of fifty years ago.

In the middle of the 1980's, schools are once again the target of reform movements, and calls for substantial reform are supported from the White House on down. Whether the current reform movement will be any more successful than past movements remains to be seen, but within the confines of a building or the privacy of a classroom, individual teachers are able to shrug off even such national entreaties to change and continue to teach much as they have always done. The organization of the school and the culture of the school are powerful allies in resisting change. On a less cynical note, they also provide

"protection for teachers and school systems against self-serving change agents and ill-conceived but often well funded educational reform efforts.

The Role of Supervision

Where does supervision fit in such a discussion? While scholars of supervision differ on its process, most would tend to agree that it is related to goal achievement in schools and most directly to the improvement of instruction. That it should "improve instruction" may be the only common point of view among scholars in the field.

Supervisors have long been told that they should bring about change, although less frequently given the tools to do it (Crosby, 1969). Evidence is sorely lacking that supervisors really make a difference. Blumberg (1980), for example, comments on the standoff between teachers and supervisors that he refers to as a "cold war," suggesting that supervisors want to do more and more of what it is that teachers say is of no help. Sullivan (1981) and Pajak (1986) confirm that central office supervisors are heavily involved in managerial activities and spend little time in direct contact with teachers and even less time in classroom observation. Other writers have also documented the limited direct contact between supervisors and teachers, and Lortie (1975), Holly (1974), and Alfonso and Goldsberry (1982) noted that teachers continue to report that colleagues and not supervisors are their best source of ideas and help. In short, supervision and supervisors do not get very high marks. This conclusion flies in the face of this author's firm belief that supervision must exist in all organizations or they will have no direction and will not long survive:

All institutions and complex organizations provide for programs of supervision. Organizations are complicated structural systems whose efficiency and effectiveness depend on the skills and work effort of many people. The organization's goals must be understood, production procedures

followed, schedules met, work evaluated, and adjustments made in response to changing needs. Supervision is directly responsible for such functions and, thereby, contributes substantially to the productive life of the organization. Therefore, the purpose of supervision is constant across all types of organizations: to provide the conditions and promote the behavior necessary for the achievement of organizational goals. . . . The essential element in the supervisor's work in all organizations is his or her direct and continuing relationship with those responsible for production of goods or services. The supervisor works at close range within a work unit. (Alfonso, Firth and Neville, 1981, p. 4)

Our perceptions and perceptual studies can mislead us. Yet, there is reasonably ample evidence that supervisors and supervision (no matter how one defines it) are in rather short supply. In addition, what is provided is often discounted by teachers as being irrelevant or, even worse, intrusive.

In my own writing I have argued that supervision must always be present, that it is the linking pin that translates goals into action and that an organization cannot long be effective or attain its goals without supervision. In truth, the kind of close in supervision I have described above is seldom present, nor is there much of any other kind. Yet, schools do continue to exist with, arguably, reasonable degrees of effectiveness and goal attainment.

Broudy, in commenting on the school as a social system, said, "There is a profound discrepancy between the public's expectations of the school and the competence of the personnel recruited to meet these expectations. Schooling is made the pivot of all social well being and progress, but it is entrusted to a teaching force that is marginal in talent, training, and career commitment. . . . The teaching force is made up neither of interchangeable, skilled technicians who could be freely plugged into any school, nor of highly

"individualized professional persons who can adapt to any school room in terms of knowledge. . . . Sooner or later, the school as a social system will disintegrate into a thousand fragmented programs, courses, and curricula if it continues to cater to an unlimited plurality of cultural predilections." (1969, p. 27-28)

It is interesting to note that this observation by Professor Broudy was made in the late sixties, at the tail end of several years of massive curriculum reform attempts.

The catastrophe predicted in Professor Broudy's dire warning did not, of course, come to pass -- or at least has not yet. Schools in that period and since have warded off what Broudy called the "whims and prejudices that various groups are tempted to elevate into curricular demands." Schools as social systems have not disintegrated. And even without much that can be called effective supervision, schools do not fall apart at the organizational seams, teachers have a sense of purpose, and many have experienced a genuine sense of fulfillment. With some regret, I must conclude that if they are kept on target, provided direction, and satisfactorily achieve school goals, it is not as a result of the kind of supervision that I have so long advocated and believed must be present.

While recognizing that the particular form that supervision takes is related to the nature of an organization and its production system, it is very difficult to identify and describe the way it takes place in schools and to provide evidence that, in fact, it makes a difference. Pajak's (1986) recent study of the activities of central office supervisors causes one to ask whether they are engaging in supervisory behavior at all, and many other studies over the years have reported the extent to which principals are burdened with managerial tasks and the limited amount of time they are able to give to direct contact with teachers.

In the absence of direct supervision and frequent observation, teachers have a truly incredible amount of autonomy. Few workers have as much freedom to engage in independent decision making and exercise as much control over their work as does the typical classroom teacher. The startling but reassuring conclusion one reaches, however, is that individual teachers and groups of teachers within a building do not quite "go it alone" and there is not organizational or curricular chaos -- except in rare circumstances. On the contrary, there is a remarkable amount of symmetry and continuity. The pieces do fit together. At least they fit together better than we have a right to expect, given the circumstances. While critics may bemoan the sameness of schools and their resistance to change, one can also marvel at and be grateful for the degree of continuity and competence in the absence of what many of us call instructional supervision.

The Unseen Supervisor

In the title of this paper I refer to the "unseen supervisor." There is a "something" that helps keep schools and teachers on target, that teaches them how to behave, establishes standards, values, and sanctions, and which provides guidance and validation for one's work. The organization and culture of the school may thwart some needed change efforts, but they also provide the direction and support that teachers need.

Do we who are advocates of instructional supervision promise more than it can actually deliver? Does supervision take too much credit for providing direction and achieving results? Probably, the answer is yes. In the most cynical vein, does supervision, in fact, manage an "other directed" system? Is the persistent culture of the school -- the unseen supervisor -- a more powerful determinant of teacher behavior than all the efforts of principals, supervisors, and educational reformers? When supervisors are in such short supply and when direct contact with teachers is so infrequent, can the field of

supervision legitimately claim that it is fulfilling the traditional role of supervision in all formal organizations?

Schools are like other formal organizations in some ways, but in some other important ways they are very different. Virtually all teachers have a high degree of autonomy and privacy. These common conditions are most clearly manifested in the secondary schools where there is little observation by principals and supervisors and infrequent contact between colleagues. High school teachers maintain what has been referred to as an "almost collusive and deliberate ignorance" of the work of their colleagues: "In many school systems formal feedback on teaching performance may come no more than once a year and then in a quite perfunctory way. One of the tragedies of American education is that teachers work in isolation. Their immediate superiors often have only a rather generalized perception of their teaching performance. Teaching is still largely a solo act, observed, appreciated, and evaluated primarily by students." (Alfonso and Goldsberry, 1982, p. 91) Such conditions in school organizations could lead to great discrepancies in behavior and outcomes. They do not.

Tumin (1977) enumerates the characteristics that schools share with other large-scale formal organizations: bureaucratic structure; hierarchy and distribution of power and responsibility; and multiple constituencies. He also indicates, however, that schools differ from other organizations in two particular ways: high visibility and public control, and a considerable vagueness about what constitutes success or failure in the operation of schools. Tumin observes that the public schools are more publicly controlled and financed than other major social institutions and their actions are often more highly visible and subject to public scrutiny. He says, "That means that one is literally living in a fish bowl part of the time when one is teaching. One compensation for that is that one can always close the door to one's

'classroom and teach one's best without very much inference at all from anyone."

In regard to success, Tumin observes that schools differ from other organizations in "the utter vagueness of what constitutes success and failure in the operation of the school. . . . In the face of the vague criteria of success, one can only do one's best to achieve what one thinks is important in the education venture."

Lortie (1977) provides an interesting analysis of teachers as professionals by comparing them with technical personnel in other organizations. A worker on the assembly line has a very low level of personal discretion, while a surgeon in a hospital is expected to exercise great discretion in making decisions about treatment. In the middle ranges, Lortie notes, are found reporters, police officers, and nurses, all operating within established limits under the close supervision of superiors.

Teacher discretion, he finds, is a mixed bag, being broad in some ways and quite narrow in others. They may have considerable autonomy in handling the interpersonal aspects of teaching and the many details of classroom management, areas of autonomy because of a teacher's physical isolation and because of informal norms that limit intervention by administrators in classroom affairs. A teacher's work, Lortie says, "is reviewed at relatively infrequent intervals, a fact that points to greater autonomy; and review is normally not as threatening to teachers as it is to those in the other fields." He also points out that other middle range professionals work under almost constant surveillance of their actions and continued employment can be reviewed at almost any time. A nurse, for example, works under the direction of senior nurses and physicians who have no hesitation about noting mistakes and taking corrective action.

Despite the rather broad scope of discretion and the comparatively infrequent and unthreatening review, teachers do not possess any of the kind of

power as a group that one would expect from professionals with as much autonomy as they possess. Lortie notes that although seen as professionals in school organizations, teachers are an anomaly: they have high discretion in matters of method, high job security, and freedom from excessive review, but they lack corresponding power and, in fact, have no greater power than others in mid-range occupations who have less control and autonomy in their work.

As schools become larger, the principles of hierarchy and bureaucracy become necessary tools of management. The larger the school, the more that teachers are subordinated at the end of a long ladder of authority. As school systems during the twentieth century became larger and more bureaucratic, teachers began to focus their energies and time almost totally on classroom affairs, leaving other organizational matters to administrators and other interested persons. As a consequence, the system encouraged teachers to "privatize" their work (Lortie, 1975).

Further, as relationships between administrators and teachers became increasingly strained in the last two decades and as collective bargaining emerged, the line between management and teaching became more sharply drawn. Visits to classrooms became less frequent and more structured, and many teachers were less inclined to become involved in the non-classroom work of the school, or if involved, only in a representative way through the local bargaining committee.

Lortie (1977) also draws a contrast between teachers and professors, who not only determine the content of the courses they teach but also shape their institutions through departmental committees and faculty senates and play a major role in deciding who joins the faculty and who receives tenure and promotion. In contrast, the assertiveness of teachers has centered primarily on limiting the ability of their superiors to influence their work and on

personal interests. Their assertiveness has done little to make them a professional force in the governance of schools and school systems.

Perhaps in exchange for such rights, teachers protect the privacy of the classroom, enjoy freedom from observation and regular criticism, and develop an informal system of rights, responsibilities, and accepted professional practice in which peers establish informal but strong cultural and even organizational norms. Such norms further thwart the attempts of assertive administrators, who must face not only the reality of culture but also the reality of infrequent and limited opportunities to intervene.

The school as a formal organization has a long history, and it is a history that is known, understood and accepted. It may be a mystery to the general public about what happens within the walls of IBM, the Pentagon, or the Vatican, but there are few mysteries for them about the public school. A school is a school, and it is organized in a particular way and widely accepted things are done there. It is commonly understood that there are teachers, classrooms, hallways, class periods, assignments, lectures, tests, and homework. Long established and time honored rules are to be followed. For teachers and for the public, schooling is a shared experience; there are commonly held perceptions about the nature of schools. If the tradition and organization of the school works against change, it nevertheless helps to make things "run right."

The organization of the school -- the compartmentalization, autonomy, and privacy of teachers -- also provides a formidable barrier to the practice of instructional supervision. Teachers are simply not as visible or as accessible as are employees in many other formal organizations. While teachers may not receive much direct supervision, they are not without direction.

Schools provide direction through their own organization -- grade levels, specializations (e.g., language arts teachers), and, in the case of

high schools, departmentalization. The organization places limits on one's autonomy: "I am a tenth grade English teacher and in the tenth grade we teach American fiction and poetry and expository writing." Guidelines are known and followed without the active intervention of supervisors. The adopted textbook and other teaching materials provide a substitute for the kind of identification of tasks and task direction that might be provided by a supervisor in another organization. In short, schools are organized in such a way as to compensate for the lack of direction that supervision normally provides. Curriculum guides, materials, approved texts, and schoolwide testing place limits on teacher autonomy and, in effect, specify what is to be accomplished.

Weick (1982) and Blumberg (1980) comment on schools as "loosely coupled organizations." Weick makes the observation that schools are not like other organizations and that they need to be managed differently, arguing that their uniqueness comes from the fact that they are joined more loosely than other organizations and only a limited amount of inspection occurs. Weick states, "A principal who visits a classroom too frequently is accused of 'harrassment.' Professionals are reluctant to give one another unsolicited feedback. As a result, poor performance persists because inattention is justified as a respect for professional autonomy."

Schools are loosely coupled, but they are not "uncoupled;" there is communication and there are organizational expectations. Even in loosely coupled organizations, however, changes and practices are resisted if they become a threat to group existence and solidarity. In addition, the "coupling" that takes place in the informal organization may often be overlooked by those who describe schools as loosely coupled.

If, as Lortie says, teachers are an anomaly in formal organizations, instructional supervision may also be so viewed. Supervision claims to achieve

much in schools and is charged with the sweeping responsibility "to improve instruction." Yet, it must proceed in the face of enormous organizational barriers -- time, teacher-supervisor ratios, collective bargaining agreements, physical distance, uncertain measures of success, inadequate standards of professional practice, and the existence of strong cultural norms which prescribe and reinforce acceptable teacher behavior. It is an uphill struggle, and it is not surprising that evidence of effective supervision is hard to find. In fact, if Lortie's observations are correct, a too active program of instructional supervision will most likely be seen by teachers as an intrusion and a violation of their time-honored organizational prerogatives.

Organizational Culture

The current and popular construct of organizational culture has its scholarly antecedents in the classic work of Lewin (1952) on force field analysis and in a multitude of research studies in the decades of the forties through the sixties on group norms and group behavior. Every organization teaches its members how to behave. To be a member of a group and to remain in good standing one must conform to the expectations of the group. One must, in effect, adopt the culture and its prevailing values as one's own. To refuse to do so is to be a "fringe" member or an isolate. Organizations can tolerate a few such people, but not many. Without conformity, without commonly held values, there is no organization.

The process of socialization takes place in virtually all organizations. Formal organizations cannot long tolerate members who do not adopt prevalent values, who disagree with the organization's purposes, and who behave in ways that violate established group norms. The process of socialization is most clearly evident in settings such as military basic training, college fraternities and sororities, and religious orders. On closer examination, however, one finds it in varying degrees throughout organizational life;

incidentally, it also exists within graduate training programs in education, when doctoral students are socialized to the profession.

New teachers are "indoctrinated" and taught what is acceptable behavior. The process starts as early as during the student teaching experience. Migra (1976) documented the shift in values that took place during a ten-week student teaching experience. To be a member of the teacher group and to be accepted (even as student teachers), they had to begin to adopt the values and beliefs of the teachers as their own.

Every organization and sub-categories of organizations teach their new members the "rules of the game." When an acquaintance of mine took his first job as a young man with General Motors in 1946, he received the following advice from an established employee during his first few days on the job: "If you want to succeed in General Motors, son, let me give you some advice. Get a good haircut, and keep your suit pressed and your shoes shined." I suspect there was other information and norm-messages delivered later, but the process of socialization began very early and directed itself at some tangible evidences of adaptation. (As I look back at my friend in those early days, I recall that he did in fact have a good haircut, shiny shoes, and some nice suits of clothes. I also recall that his purchase of clothes was well beyond his financial means. In any event, he worked for General Motors about two years and has spent the last thirty-eight years in religious work. Socialization doesn't always work.)

The process of "learning the ropes" is that of being taught what is important in the organization. In some organizations it actually means the unfreezing or "unlearning" of prior attitudes and values and an indoctrination and refreezing of new ones.

The term "culture" has a variety of meanings and interpretations. When we use it in combination with the term "organization" we give it still another

meaning. I have already referred to socialization as learning the "ropes" and this is one of the interpretations of culture. Others see it as a philosophy (Ouchi, 1981), feeling or climate (Tagiuri and Litwin, 1968), values (Deal and Kennedy, 1982), or as learning to play by the rules (Ritti and Funkhouser, 1982).

Schein (1985) defines organizational culture as "a pattern of basic assumptions -- invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration -- that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems." (p. 9) It is this definition that is used in this paper.

It is important to distinguish between culture and climate. Sergiovanni (1983) deals with the importance of identifying organizational climate, which he describes as the "personality" of a school. The work of Sergiovanni and of Halpin (1967) is useful in describing observable characteristics of schools, but this is at a different level of analysis than the pervasive, deep-rooted nature of organizational culture. The "personality" of a school may be more readily changed than its culture, and the climate as Sergiovanni defines it is determined very heavily by principal-teacher relationships. Culture, on the other hand, has tradition, history, and generations of reinforcement.

Schein (1985) points out that an organization cannot have a "culture" unless there has been enough shared experience so that it has led to a shared view and that the shared view has been in effect long enough so that it has come to be something that is taken for granted and has dropped out of the category of awareness. In this sense, culture is a learned product of group experience found only in organizations where there is a definable group with a significant history.

Colleges of education try to socialize their students toward a concept of the profession of education, what a professional teacher ought to be, what they should value, and how they should relate to students. School systems, on the other hand, try to socialize new teachers into being effective members of schools as organizations. We have often heard graduates of our college of education -- too often -- indicate that much of what they were taught in their undergraduate program was irrelevant if not absolutely incorrect. They imply that their professors did not understand the realities of life in a school classroom and that they were living in an "ivory tower."

The issue of graduates' perceptions of teacher education and professorial perceptions of the public schools is a complex one and cannot be explored in this paper. Briefly, however, professors of education have become socialized in their own roles to espouse particular values concerning the schools, the nature of teaching, and changes that are needed. They, in fact, went through the process of having their values as former teachers "unfrozen" and gradual socialization to a new role and new attitudes. It is also possible that we, as professors, most appreciate those students who are closest to being socialized to our way of thinking.

It is not surprising that teacher education graduates almost without exception describe student teaching as the most valuable experience in their entire professional program. It is here, as Migra (1976) found out, that the process of induction into the profession begins. It is here, in teachers lounges and in casual encounters, that the "real world" is experienced. Student teachers must please the university supervisor of student teaching, but it is also important, perhaps more so, that they be accepted and judged as promising by cooperating teachers and other teachers with whom they come in contact. This experience is also the last step before embarking on a career of teaching. We in universities view it as a demonstration of what they have

learned on our campuses, but we may overlook the significant socialization that takes place, a process that sometimes places a student in an uncomfortable dilemma. It is also important to note that this socialization process is in the hands of classroom teachers and is not guided by principals and supervisors, except in rare instances.

In recent years teacher education programs have come under severe criticism. One of the remedies suggested is that students should spend more time in field experience in schools and that it should start early and be continuous throughout their program. Based on what we know about socialization and organizational culture, it is unlikely that extensive field experience will produce teachers who are dramatically different from those who are already in the schools. On the contrary, the reverse is likely to happen for the process of socialization begins only that much sooner and is that much more intensive.

The ultimate field experience is that in which the novice is apprenticed to a senior craftsman, and an apprenticeship is the most perfect form of socialization.

There is a positive side to the socialization process. New members of an organization need to learn how to behave, and the examples and advice received from peers are important in the process of adjusting to a new job or to a new organization. When peer group norms support organizational norms, they can be a valuable asset to the larger organization. As Schein (1968) points out, however, when the values of a group into which a new person is hired are out of line with the value system of the larger organization the new person is likely to learn the immediate group's values much more quickly than those of the total organization. Such a development is, naturally, a great disappointment to management, and I suspect that this situation is quite common in schools. Principals are often dismayed when new teachers on whom they pin their hopes for change quickly become in thought and practice very much like

the existing faculty. In school systems where relationships between administrators and teachers are strained, this kind of sub-group socialization is still more pronounced.

An entire organization may be said to have a culture, but there are also cultures that develop within smaller social units that have had the opportunity to live and work together and adopt a basic set of assumptions. Such sub-cultures are frequently observable in schools. They may develop around grade levels, age groups, or, as in high schools, disciplines. In other cases, we are aware of an organizational culture that is widely shared throughout a school or a school system.

In every organization there are assumptions about how people should relate to each other. It is these understandings that keep a group orderly, safe, and comfortable. When such cultural assumptions are not understood or shared, the result is anarchy and institutional cannibalism. Golding's (1958) Lord of the Flies, for example, dramatized what happens to human beings when they do not have clear agreement on how they are to relate to each other. Culture is important, for it provides support and safety in a complex world. For most of us, group membership is almost essential to human survival. But to be a member of a group also exacts a price, for to be a "good" group member one must adopt the values and beliefs of the group as one's own.

The Culture of the School

Schools provide an interesting example of Schein's (1984) definition of organizational culture. He said that to make something "cultural" it has to have a "taken for granted quality which makes the underlying assumptions virtually undiscussable." (p. 10) When a culture is firmly established, members are scarcely even aware of the beliefs and rules that guide their behavior.

One can refer to the strength or weakness of a culture. These relative conditions are determined by stability of group membership, the length and intensity of shared experiences, and the group's history of success in coping with difficult problems. Given the stability of the teaching profession in recent years and the limited opportunity to bring in new faculty, a number of the conditions are present that lead to cultural "strength." In collective bargaining situations or in other cases in which teachers have had successful battles with the administration, culture becomes still more firmly established.

In contrast, if a school has much turnover among faculty, has not faced difficult issues, and lacks stability, there may not have been enough shared experience for the entire group to have a sharply defined culture. It should be noted, however, that there are commonly shared values and assumptions among all teachers, regardless of locale, stability, or length of service (Alfonso, 1986).

Schein (1985) stated that "culture gives a group its character, and that character serves for the group the function that character and defense mechanisms serve for the individual. . . . Once an organization has evolved a mature culture because it has had a long and rich history, that culture creates the patterns of perception, thought, and feeling of every new generation in the organization." (p. 313) This finding has particular application to schools, where such shared assumptions characterize their culture and are passed from one generation of teachers to another.

As noted earlier in this paper, there are few mysteries about the operation of schools. The school's history is long and widely shared. Moreover, the process of induction and enforcement of the culture is primarily in the hands of other teachers. It is very little influenced, if at all, by supervisors and administrators. It would be a particularly confident and resilient teacher who could successfully resist adopting the organizational culture, in the absence

" of strong support from supervisors and principals. Even when such strong administrative support for an isolate is given, however, it may merely result in that teacher being further alienated from the dominant teacher group. This person may always be an outsider or fringe member, or when alienation and rejection become intolerable they leave the profession of teaching altogether.

Jokes have long been made about the school janitor or secretary who gives advice to new teachers and is a primary source of information and help. Given what we know about organizational culture, and in particular the organization of the school, these were not idle stories. Janitors and secretaries are frequently long time employees and probably provide a service for new teachers by helping to explain the "rules of the game." Their understanding of cultural norms is at least the equivalent of that of the teachers (perhaps, as an observer, even keener) and are often able to communicate important information to new teachers about what is necessary for survival.

Schmuck and Runkel (1972) observe that "norms within the school provide coherence in its social structure. Members of a school staff behave in patterned, predictable ways because their behavior is guided by common expectations, attitudes and understandings. . . norms are strong stabilizers of organizational behavior. For the individual, norms provide a basis for 'social reality', especially when physical or objective reality is uncertain or ambiguous. . . . The importance of norms in organizational adaptability lies in their strength and persistence." (p. 9)

Stability is a major factor in the development of culture, but stability in schools is largely within the teaching ranks, not within the administrator ranks. Teachers are not particularly mobile, they do not "move on" to better teaching positions or school systems. Administrators and supervisors, on the other hand, are more likely to be professionally mobile and seek

" advancement within the profession. As a result, teacher groups may see themselves as the permanent, stabilizing force in a school system -- and they may well be. Frequently, a very aggressive or innovative supervisor or administrator is tolerated, even ignored, on the understanding that an ambitious person will soon move on and "we will just ride it out until that happens."

The combination of the nature of school organization, the privacy of the act of teaching, and the strong and enduring culture of the school present formidable barriers for supervision. It also forces one to raise the question asked earlier in this paper concerning the effectiveness of supervision in light of these obstacles. The ratio of teachers to supervisors works against any frequent contact. Review of performance occurs only occasionally and usually on a scheduled basis. The cultural norms of teachers frequently work counter to the wishes of supervisors, and the work reported by Blumberg, Sullivan, Pajak and others over the years suggests that much of what supervisors do is managerial, not classroom based, and not valued by teachers.

In the absence of readily available and effective supervision, the culture and organization of the schools provide direction and reinforcement. The answer to the question raised early in this paper, "how can schools and teachers continue to operate with reasonable effectiveness when there is so little of what is traditionally called supervision?", is explained in part by history, tradition, organization, and the culture of the school. Without these and also without formal supervision, schools would in fact -- as Broudy warned -- be in chaos.

I have used the term "unseen supervisor" to describe the depth and power of these forces, fitting Schein's (1984, 1985) definition of organizational culture as a set of assumptions, beliefs, and practices that are so firmly held that they are almost below the level of awareness and are virtually

"undiscussable. We may regret that these cultural factors sometimes thwart the good efforts of supervisors as well as broad based change efforts in school systems. We may, however, also be grateful that culture serves the function of stabilizing school environments.

It would not be beneficial if every new generation of teachers and principals could introduce new rules, perceptions, assumptions, and behaviors. The culture of an organization is an important and necessary stabilizing force. It may be particularly important in schools. The fact that it sometimes works against the introduction of change and makes changing teacher behavior more difficult does not diminish its importance.

What is known about school organizations and culture raises some questions about current supervisory practice and its effectiveness. It may also suggest some reconsideration of how instructional supervision is organized and carried out.

What Can Supervision and Supervisors Do?

The school has an enduring culture. Supervisors and reformers frequently fail in change efforts because they try to change individual teacher behavior or the behavior of groups while ignoring the culture of the school. A wealth of research evidence exists concerning the extent to which individual decision is held captive to group norms. Where there are cohesive groups, an individual is often unable even to express an opinion until first finding out how the group feels.

Culture does not change from year to year and it does not change, for example, because a new superintendent comes to town. What is known as "climate" can more easily be modified, but culture changes slowly over a period of years as a result of new experiences, new insights, and a gradual shift in values. The truth of the matter is that supervision can do little to change the culture of a school. A school culture takes a long time to evolve; it is

rooted in history, shared experience, victories and defeats, and it is not easily manipulated.

Supervisors may wish to change a culture and sometimes they ought to try. In the meantime, they need to understand the culture of a school and learn to operate within it. To ignore norms and understandings that are so entrenched that they operate below the level of awareness is to be continually frustrated and place the blame either on the obstinacy of individual teachers or on oneself and one's own limitations. Obviously, individual teacher behavior can be influenced, but the nature and extent of the change is determined in part by the strength of the culture and the importance of group membership.

As difficult as it is to modify culture, it may in the longrun be more effective than working exclusively with individual teachers. First of all, there are not nearly enough supervisors available to bring about a dramatic change in schools by working on a one to one basis with teachers. Clinical supervision, for example, is a very thorough but time consuming activity. It could not conceivably reach many teachers in the course of a year and probably does little to alter the culture of a school. It provides excellent feedback and can improve practice, but it is done in isolation. When a clinical supervision cycle is ended, a teacher can use what was learned or can completely ignore it. There is little that is done in clinical supervision (or in any other supervisory process that focuses on individual teachers) that alters values, expectations, norms, or the overriding culture of the school.

As pointed out earlier in this paper, there is virtually no daily, direct contact between supervisors and teachers. In this respect, schools differ dramatically from many other formal organizations. Since it is the organization and culture of the school that provide the ongoing direction, it is important that the strength of the "unseen supervisor" be recognized. This

also suggests that supervisors should spend more time with groups of teachers and on organizational matters, rather than devoting themselves to an endless round of classroom visitations which make little significant difference.

When I speak of "organizational matters," I do not refer to managerial activities, but to broad issues of values and purpose whose examination could begin to change attitudes of teachers toward what they do and how they do it. The culture of a school will simply not be changed by working on a fragmented and occasional basis with individual teachers. Culture is too strong and supervisors are too few.

Schein (1985) points out that managers (supervisors) themselves are also affected by culture: "Culture determines not only the ways in which the internal system of authority, communication, and work is organized and managed but also the organization's most basic sense of mission and goals. . . do not assume that culture can be manipulated like other matters under the control of managers. Culture controls a manager more than the manager controls culture, through the automatic filters that bias the manager's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings." (p. 314)

Schein also makes the observation that managers in most organizations need to be "aware" of culture, but that it is not something that they should work on or dwell on constantly. What such insight does is provide another level of explanation for us as to why things sometimes do or do not work out.

It is occasionally easier for someone from outside a culture to perceive accurately its nature and what is needed in order to create new experiences and modify a culture. When a supervisor is from within inside the culture itself, a special level of insight and self-awareness is needed.

Schein further notes that "a dynamic analysis of organizational culture makes it clear that leadership is intertwined with culture formation, evolution, transformation, and destruction. Culture is created in the first

instance by the actions of leaders; culture also is embedded and strengthened by leaders. When culture becomes dysfunctional, leadership is needed to help the group unlearn some of its cultural assumptions and learn new assumptions. . . . In fact, the endless discussion of what leadership is and is not could, perhaps, be simplified if we recognize that the unique and essential function of leadership is the manipulation of culture." (p. 317) Schein believes that the particular function of leadership, as contrasted with management or administration, is that leadership is responsible for the creation and management of culture.

Supervisors are not in power positions in schools, and there are some limits on what they can do to manipulate the culture. There are some things, however, that they can do.

The process through which new teachers are socialized is an area in which supervisors could have some influence, but in fact have very little. The role of supervisors and administrators in the induction of new teachers is too often limited to procedural matters, administrative details, and board policies. Outside of perfunctory welcoming comments, little is done to try to shape understandings and values that might help guide the work of a new teacher. Such an attempt would not be sufficient, for followup and support are needed if values are to be sustained for an individual teacher or group of teachers. The process of socialization is primarily in the hands of informal teacher groups or, in some school systems, representatives of teacher organizations. Supervisors need to be as actively involved in the socialization process as are teacher-colleagues. Generally they are not, but it represents the first and best opportunity to influence what is important and what is expected in a school system.

In addition, some knowledge and skill must be focused on neutralizing those forces or factors that socialize new teachers to cultural assumptions that are

counterproductive. Forces will vary from one school to another, but supervisors need to become students of the culture and its forces. As pointed out by Schein, it is probably easier for an outsider or a new supervisor to make this assessment than for one who himself/herself has long been part of the culture.

Sometimes people continue to abide by a certain code, because no one has bothered to examine it. In fact, it may be open for challenge, but there is no mechanism through which to bring people together for an examination of what they believe and to examine the discrepancy between what they wish to achieve and what they are actually achieving.

Contact with others does cause us to examine our beliefs. Schoolwide activities (rather than unit activities), interschool committees, external contact, and exchange programs are all mechanisms for bringing people into contact with others and for providing an opportunity for values and assumptions to be examined. Such examination does not take place automatically. It is in this area that a supervisor can provide leadership by using these opportunities for reorienting faculty and manipulating the culture.

While staff development seems to be a means for achieving some of these goals, it typically operates at a level quite different from cultural assumptions. Rather, it presents information and tries to explain and get teachers to adopt improved practices. Rarely, does it get to the level of what is valued, the underlying assumptions that guide teachers and school systems. Culture operates as a set of implicit and silent assumptions, and it is unlikely that they can be changed unless brought to the surface and confronted (Schein, 1985, p. 303).

Radical intervention is also possible. An example of this is wholesale reassignment of teachers and administrators in order to break up cohesive

groups, get a different "mix," and provide a better opportunity for an administrator to bring about change. It doesn't always work. First, it frequently causes resentment that can take years to die down and secondly, norms common to the culture of American schools may be so ingrained (particularly within a given school system) that the new mix results in little noticeable cultural modification. It is a last resort, sometimes effective but just as often ineffective.

It is clear, however, that the traditional practice of working with a teacher at a time in a school at a time -- especially in the case of a central office supervisor -- is ineffective. It is an inefficient use of time, fails to recognize group membership, and does little to address the assumptions that guide the work of all within the school. What is known about organizational culture suggests the need for supervisors to work more often with groups of teachers and with an entire school faculty, rather than so exclusively with individuals. Through genuine efforts at solving real problems or in carefully constructed group inquiry into assumptions that guide their work, new expectations may be created.

Changing culture is an uphill struggle, and no one should be naively optimistic about chances for success. On the other hand, to continue to operate as we have been, in disregard of the culture, is to continue to be disappointed when our best efforts are neutralized by history and tradition. Unless supervision becomes more successful in changing the culture of the school, the "unseen supervisor" will continue to direct and validate the work of teachers.

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